



## Oneida Indian Nation

Fighting for the cause of American liberty and independence, the Oneida Nation sent its warriors to battlegrounds ranging from Valley Forge Pennsylvania to the Canadian border of New York during the Revolution. The alliance forged with the nascent United States was of the Oneida's choosing. It was one they honored throughout the war and they honored it still. The price paid by the Oneida Nation for this stand is almost beyond comprehension. They lost their homes and property, they endured starvation, disease, and the sometimes violent bigotry of the allies; and they lost the lives of at least a third of their people. At the most crucial moment of the conflict, in the decisive year of war, the Oneidas stood forth and played a strategically significant role in the American Revolution

An Oneida leader once remarked "If all the skulls of the Oneida Indians killed by British forces in fighting to help the colonials get their freedom were piled together, the pile would be larger than the largest building in Albany."

There was a speech given by Oneida Sachems to a party of young warriors traveling to serve with General Washington at Valley Forge. The Oneida Warriors were escorted to Valley Forge by French Volunteer Anne-Louis De Tousard.

Nephews, Warriors open your ears. You are now parting with your uncles the sachems. Tis common on such occasion to speak a few words. Young warriors often need advice. You are undertaking a long march; you will be exposed to fatigues and many temptations, and many will be your observers – not only Americans, but some chiefs and warriors from our father the French king.

Keep in mind that warriors sustain an important character, they can do much good or commit great enormities. They are to do good by removing out of the way such evils as threaten the peace of the country. Here they may display the hero, but private revenge is to be carefully avoid'd. To abuse and plunder a helpless (and it may be innocent) family is beneath the character of a warrior.

Nephews, Keep in mind, you are bound to the Grand Army of America, and will be introduced to General Washington the Chief Warrior, and to a great officer of our father the French king the Marquis de Lafayette at whose particular application you go. Any misconduct in you, if only a little, will be of extensive influence, the reproach not easily whiped [sic] away. Therefore observe a line of

conduct proper for warriors. Let there always be a good argument behind you. Be always of one mind, have one object in view and don't let every one think himself a head warrior or that he may use all those freedoms which are indulged at home, but let one and all yield implicit obedience to Mr. De Tousard who will conduct you in the march and fight with you.

Beware of strong liquor the common beguiler of Indians. Nephews if you observe good order, sobriety and play the man – your deportment in this case will resound through the American army, be noticed by General Washington the Chief Warrior and finally reach the ears of our father the French king – and we sachems shall then rejoice to hear from you...

To the above the warriors reply'd. Return'd thanks for their good advice, promising implicit obedience to Mr. De Tousard their conductor – that the good agreement should subsist betwixt them and clos'd with appointed exhortation to the sachems to maintain one uniform line of council in their deliberations, pursue them with resolution and not restrain the warrior. Fort Schuyler, April 24, 1778".

Tousard reported the arrival of forty-seven Oneidas at Valley Forge and, though he found the journey troublesome, "the totality behaved well enough, and we arrived the 13<sup>th</sup> of the present without any accident nor complaints against them" (Tousard to Willett, May 16, 1778).